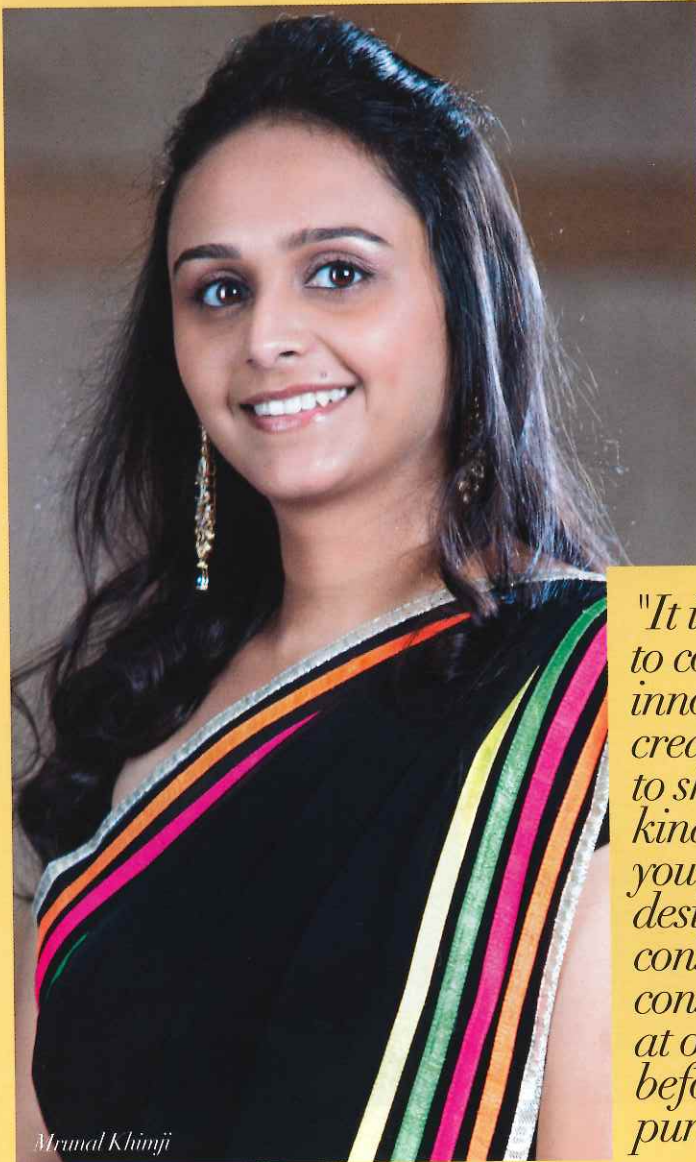


THE SOCIAL SIDE OF FASHION

The influence of social media on fashion is far-reaching and of great consequence. The Woman examines the scenario



Aruna Khimji

If you're avid fan of Instagram in Oman, you'll surely not have missed the colourful and vibrant handle @muscatstreetstyles that's all about fashion. The concept is the brainchild of Sara Al Zadjali who in an interview with *The Woman* last year said: "I was browsing through Instagram and saw that a couple of countries have their own street style accounts, so I thought, why not make one for Oman? Hence I started muscatstreetstyles."

According to her, "Instagram is the 'it' thing everywhere. I believe it has instant and widespread reach. It is at your fingertips even when you're on the go. From teenagers to old people, everyone is using it. There are also several other places who have their street style accounts on Instagram such as dubaistreetstyles and lebanonstreetstyles. It seemed like the best way to reach out to the masses."

There is no doubt that social media has had a huge impact on the fashion industry. Scroll through Instagram accounts in Oman and you can be sure fashion plays a major role – designers, retailers, home based businesses are all showcasing their creativity through this highly popular medium. It's simple, quick and effective – all you need is a smartphone and an eye for detail – the world of fashion is at your fingertips!

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Globally, social media is changing the way people look at fashion and the industry looks at its consumers. Social media means free advertising so Facebook promotions, Twitter retweets and Pinterest pins means the information is shared manifold and the more consumers it potentially gains.



Amal Al Raisi

Recently, Misha Nonoo took to Instagram where she revealed her collection in a unique mosaic format. The dedicated account @mishanonoo_show featured an endless photoshoot, each square making up part of a larger picture of the full spring/summer 2016 line. DKNY also took to Instagram in a big way where stills, videos and illustrations on the new collection were posted. Burberry however went the Snapchat way revealing its collection a full day before it hit the catwalk. Twitter's new 'Halo' made a smashing debut with backstage scenes at Tommy Hilfiger. If you didn't know already, this is a multi-camera device that captures 360-degree videos and posts them onto Twitter. The brand used it to showcase the first looks from its collection.

Fashion bloggers now form part of the elite crowd that grace the world's fashion week events and are now influencing styles more than ever before. Fashionistas are now taking a cue from fashion blogs whose followers run into millions to 'be in style' and know what's hot or not!

Closer home, Mrunal Khimji, a pioneer in the field of designing and the creative force behind Mrunal's Boutique says: "Globalisation has taken over and the world has become a very small place. It is therefore very important to continuously innovate, and be creative in order to showcase the kind of work that you can do as a designer, because consumers are constantly looking at options much before designing and purchasing. Designers can also take inspiration from each other and follow global trends to implement and ensure they keep up with the fast paced fashion world -

without any social media, I would personally find it very tough to keep track of international trends. The flip side of social media is that people look for much cheaper options of international designers by showing the image and wanting the same copied; this is the case not just in the fashion industry but any creative product or service; the touch and feel in retail is giving way to the ease of availability of options through online retailers."

Amal Al Raisi of Dar Al Aseel, a big name on the Oman fashion scene says: "Social media influences fashion but there are pros and cons of this influence. We do have quick access to what's trending around the world as soon as it happens. We get information on different designers, different tastes, what's popular in a

certain season or what is expected in the next. But then with all this information, if designers are not really sure what their line is or what makes them special from others, they will basically take bits and pieces from everywhere and thus lose their identities. They will miss being 'real' designers that make them unique and differentiates their work from those of others. I believe if a designer loses her identity, then she has lost everything. On the other hand, the world of social media is full of opportunities and you can promote your work to the world with the click of a button."

It goes without saying that social media dictates fashion trends, what we wear and to a large extent, even what we buy online. But with more social media apps, the speed at which the fashion world is moving seems to be at full throttle. It remains to be seen whether designers will keep up with the pace and still remain true to their identities.

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